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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH STATE SECRETARY TIILIKAINEN

REF: HELSINKI 530

11. (SBU) Summary: Ambassador Ware and PolChief met with Teija Tiilikainen, State Secretary at the Finnish MFA, for a tour d'horizon of multilateral and bilateral issues. Topics included potential increases to Finland's NATO/ISAF commitments in Afghanistan; Kosovo; Russia; and Finland's 2008 OSCE Presidency. End Summary.

NATO/ISAF

12. (SBU) Tiilikainen offered an update on internal government deliberations regarding Finland's commitments to ISAF. At the initiative of Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva and Defense Minister Jyri Hakamies, the GOF is currently preparing a detailed report for Prime Minister Vanhanen to present to Parliament examining all aspects of Finland's activities in Afghanistan, including peacekeeping, crisis management and reconstruction assistance (see refTel). None of the report's details are yet available, but the FM and the MOD tell us they are leaning toward recommending significant increases in both troops and reconstruction assistance. Tiilikainen noted, however, that convincing key Parliamentarians -- including Center Party politicians from within the governing coalition -- that increased commitments to ISAF are in Finland's interest will be a major challenge. The "summer news drought" has attracted unhelpful media attention to the issue, she said, and there are also public opinion hurdles to be overcome in the wake of a Finnish soldier's death in Meymenah last spring. Still, Tiilikainen noted that winning over -- or at least satisfying -- skeptical MPs was an integral "part of Finland's political culture" and she expressed confidence that the forthcoming report would win the cabinet's approval and ultimately allow Finland to take a greater role. The Ambassador strongly reinforced the idea that doing more in Afghanistan is in Finland's interest, noting the high priority Secretary Rice placed on it during her June meeting with FM Kanerva.

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She also welcomed the GOF's forthcoming report and its effort to win political and public opinion support for ISAF.

Kosovo and Russia

13. (SBU) Turning to Kosovo, the Ambassador emphasized the importance of the US and the EU presenting a united front in support of Ahtisaari's recommendations regarding final status. Tiilikainen noted that Finland is "among those EU countries" that remain fully supportive of full independence for Kosovo. Although hesitant to say at this point whether or not Finland would recognize a unilateral Kosovar declaration of independence, she concurred with the Ambassador's view that it would be crucial for us to act in concert should the US and the EU ultimately face this eventuality. Tiilikainen also said the EU must find a way to convince Serbia that its interests lie in Europe, and that intransigence on Kosovo damaged those prospects. The Ambassador lamented the fact that the

Serb leadership appears too weak to hear this message, but noted that nonetheless the EU and US must continue to work together to emphasize this point to Belgrade. Tiilikainen also agreed that the US and the EU needed to find ways to send unified messages to Russia on a range of issues -- including Kosovo, missile defense, WTO membership and energy issues -- just as they did to good effect during the Estonia Bronze Soldier crises. Regarding missile defense, the Ambassador assured Tiilikainen that the US has had substantial dialogue with Russia over the years.

Finland's OSCE Presidency

14. (U) Tiilikainen noted that Finland will face a range of challenges during its 2008 OSCE Presidency, including relations with Russia and human rights and democracy issues in the Caucasus. The Ambassador also highlighted our shared interest in ensuring that the OSCE maintain the high quality and integrity of its election monitoring.

Biographic Notes

15. (SBU) Although Teija Tiilikainen, 43, is not formally affiliated with any political party, FM Kanerva (Conservative Party) named her in May to be the first-ever "politically appointed" State Secretary at the Foreign Ministry. [The practice of naming "political" State Secretaries is very new in Finland; a law permitting government

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ministers to exercise the option came into effect in 2004 during the first Vanhanen Administration (2003-2007).] A career academic specializing in European foreign and security policy as well as in EU integration, she served since 2003 as the director of the network for European studies at the University of Helsinki. In 2002 and 2003, she represented then-PM Paavo Lipponen (Social Democratic Party) at the Convention on the Future of Europe, responsible for drafting the EU constitutional treaty. Tiilikainen is a strong advocate of EU-NATO security cooperation, and has publicly called for close coordination between the two bodies, particularly in the

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area of crisis management operations (CMO). In her academic writings, she has argued for a common sense approach to the capacities of the EU and NATO in CMO, recognizing that NATO has far more resources while at the same time calling on the EU to continue to develop its own capacities in coordination with NATO. She has also been a strong advocate of improved civilian crisis management within the EU, arguing that this would complement well NATO's demonstrated military superiority.

16. (SBU) FM Kanerva appointed Tiilikainen largely because of her expertise on EU issues. We understand that she will focus -- and often act in Kanerva's stead -- on issues related to the EU's formulation of common foreign policy and constitutional treaty issues, as well as the democracy and human rights issues that should become a focus of Finland's OSCE Presidency. Tiilikainen's proven expertise and interest in these areas are expected to complement the emphasis that Kanerva and other senior MFA officials will place on NATO and European security initiatives.

WARE